

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

CEREAL HARVEST FORECAST, 1949-50.

Wheat 1,825,000 Acres. 27,700,000 Bushels. Average 15.18 Bushels.

Reports on their harvest prospects have been received from 3,002 farmers representing 45% of the area sown.

Acreages. The area under wheat for grain had reached the maximum of 4,181,000 acres in 1930-31 after which it fell to only 1,534,000 in 1943-44, being the lowest for any year since 1892-93. The year 1943-44 was one of controlled planting and of shortages in manpower and superphosphates. The acreage increased to 2,519,000 in 1946-47 and since then has fallen again each year and the estimated total for 1949-50 is only 1,925,000.

The following table shows that, while the area under wheat for grain and also wheat and oats for hay have decreased considerably since 1930-31, there have been fairly substantial increases in most other items of rural production. There have been increases in barley and oats for grain; in oats and other cereals grown for feeding-off; in other crops; in pastures top-dressed and also in the numbers of sheep and cattle despite a recent set back through drought losses. Included in the "Other Crops" with increased acreages are rye and field peas; lucerne, clover, etc. for seed; flax and linseed; vineyards, orchards and vegetables; and also canary, mustard, safflower, sunflower and vegetable seeds.

During the few seasons up to 1948-49, the total area under crop had been decreasing slightly. Although there were increased areas for barley and oats, they were not sufficient to counterbalance the decrease in the area under wheat. For 1949-50 there have been decreases in the area under each of these three principal cereals. It is noted also that the areas now stated to have been sown are 125,000 acres less than the areas that farmers intimated that they intended to sow.

Particulars	1930-31	1939-40	1943-44	1947-48	1948-49	1949-50
	1,000 acres	1,000 acres	1,000 acres	1,000 acres	1,000 acres	1,000 acres
Wheat for Grain	4,181	2,734	1,534	2,375	2,063	1,825
Hay	321	198	120	106	80	85
Fed Off	5	16	22	5	16	15
Total	4,507	2,948	1,676	2,486	2,159	1,925
Barley for Grain	252	504	261	562	698	675
Hay	4	8	3	3	2	2
Fed Off	11	47	40	16	28	23
Total	267	559	304	581	728	700
Oats for Grain	218	349	224	309	287	275
Hay	276	303	157	149	112	140
Fed Off	25	182	177	102	224	185
Total	519	834	558	560	623	600
W.B.O. for Grain	4,651	3,587	2,019	3,246	3,048	2,775
Hay	601	509	280	258	194	227
Fed Off	41	245	239	123	268	223
Total	5,293	4,341	2,538	3,627	3,510	3,225
All Other Crops	133	201	223	224	247	250
Total Crops	5,426	4,542	2,761	3,851	3,757	3,475
Topdressed Pastures	215	1,075	705	1,391	1,741	N.A.

Particulars	1930-31	1939-40	1943-44	1947-48	1948-49	1949-50
	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Sheep	5,981	9,941	10,371	9,055	9,366	N.A.
Cattle	219	351	424	445	461	N.A.

N.A. Not yet available.

Rainfall, etc. Comparing the average rainfall over the agricultural areas with that of the mean for the previous 44 seasons as shown in parentheses, it will be seen that April was very dry with only 23 (97) points, May above average with 208 (164), June very dry with 91 (196), July just average with 187 (194) and August another very dry month with 86 (191) points. From April to August there were only 595 (842) points. September would appear to be an average month with 161 (158) points but unfortunately most of the higher recordings were in the Counties that were not so important from the cropping standpoint. They were below average in the more important Counties; and in addition conditions were warm and drying. The dry warm conditions continued until October 8 and 9 when there were good general rains followed by further good falls during the balance of October and also during November, the October registrations being 278 (129) points and November 188 (98). The rains during these 2 months transformed the agricultural position from bad to good. The total April-November rainfall was practically the same as the 44 year mean, being 1222 (1227) points. Certain damage was done to crops, particularly barley, by storms during November and harvesting has been delayed by the continued rains and the consequent green second growth. These circumstances have made forecasting difficult but the following estimated yields are based on advices received.

Wheat. The estimated yield is 27,700,000 bushels compared with 26,136,346 in 1948-49 and with an average of 26,349,998 for the previous 10 seasons. Compared with the previous year there was an increase of 2,850,000 bushels in the Western Division, 400,000 in the Upper North and 200,000 in the Murray Mallee. There were decreases of 900,000 bushels in both the Central and Lower North Divisions and 100,000 in the South Eastern. The Western, Upper North and Murray Mallee rain recordings were decidedly above average. The estimated average wheat yield for the State was 15.18 bushels compared with 12.67 in 1948-49. The ten year average has been approximately 12 bushels.

Barley. The barley crops were affected by November storms as they were the previous season. The estimated yield of 11,850,000 bushels compares with 12,103,446 in 1948-49 and the ten year average of 8,416,996. The estimated yield per acre is 17.56 bushels compared with 17.35 in 1948-49 and the ten year average of 18.39.

It would seem that farmers underestimate barley yields or over-estimate storm losses. In 1947-48 the yield was estimated at only 13,700,000 bushels and the final figure was 15,363,461. In 1948-49 the respective figures were 11,500,000 and 12,103,446. If there has been similar underestimating this year, it is possible that the crop may be say 12½ million bushels or more.

Oats. The estimated yield is 3,250,000 bushels compared with 2,643,419 in 1948-49 and the ten year average of 3,066,434. The respective yields per acre are 11.82, 9.23 and 9.73.

Hay. The estimated tonnage of wheaten, barley and oaten hay is 257,000 compared with 243,544 in 1948-49. This tonnage excludes meadow, lucerne, etc. hay which recently has averaged about 60,000 tons. The estimated yields are wheaten 110,000, barley 2,000 and oaten 145,000 tons, the total average per acre being 1.13 tons compared with 1.25 tons in 1948-49.